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The PENUMBRA

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ON THE RACKS

A indicates an *Airboy* crossover title.
S indicates a *Scout* crossover title.
4W indicates a 4Winds Production.

AIRBOY no. 34
Airboy, Skywolf and La Lupina back in Bogantilla and back in trouble!

KAMUI nos. 14 & 15
The second book of Kamui's adventures, *The Sword Wind*, begins!

XENON nos. 1 & 2 ***New Series!***
Powerful cyborg adventure in Eclipse International/Viz Comics' latest manga bi-weekly.

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The Liberty Project must face a super-powered vigilante attack on Project Headquarters!

NEW AMERICA no. 2 (of 4) ***S 4W***
The Scout saga continues as Ross Winter sets Russia and Canada at each other's throats!

THE DREAMERY no. 7
Alice in Wonderland reaches its stunning conclusion. Plus another tale about your favorite centaurs.

VALKYRIE: Prisoner of the Past ***A***
Collected for the first time, the sell-out mini-series is together in one graphic album. By Chuck Dixon and Paul Gulacy.

AREA 88 nos. 14 & 15
The pilots of Area 88 versus The Wolf Pack—to the death!

MAI THE PSYCHIC GIRL nos. 14 & 15
Mai's chances of meeting her father are slim when the Wisdom Alliance sends Garten to capture Mai.

STRIKE! no. 5 ***4W***
Strike helps the Baltimore police with a situation that turns tragic.

ADOLESCENT RADIOACTIVE BLACK BELT HAMSTERS no. 9
A special all-jam, final issue tribute to our four furry friends from Tibet.

WALT KELLY'S CHRISTMAS CLASSICS no. 1 ***New Title!***
Spend Christmas with two endearing Walt Kelly tales from the Forties—each featuring the one and only Santa Claus.

SWORDS OF TEXAS no. 3 (of 4) ***S 4W***
Scout action continues as Banner and his Swords are ambushed by Mexican Communist Troops!

DIRECTORY TO A NONEXISTENT UNIVERSE no. 1 ***New Title!***
A special fun catalogue of all the characters who have never appeared in comics...and probably never should!

MAN OF WAR no. 2
Clues to hideous murders point to our hero, Man of War, as the culprit!

AIRBOY MEETS THE PROWLER no. 1 ***New Title! A 4W***
Leo Kragg manipulates Scott Kida into meeting Airboy...why?

ZOT! no. 16
The De-Evolutionaries return and the whole populace is climbing trees. Watch out!

ALIEN WORLDS no. 1 ***New Series!***
Bruce Jones' series is back with 48 pages of science fiction adventures illustrated by Bill Stout, Eric Shanower, Bill Wray, Bob Fingerman, Ralph Reese and Tom Yeates.

WPA MURALS IN YOUR TOWN?: This is a plea for your help. It's easy work, and you'll get a reward for your good deed, too. Here's what i want you to do:

Go down to your local post office and buy a plain pre-stamped postcard, the kind with room for the address on one side and a long message on the other side.

Now, look around you on the walls of the post office. Is there a MURAL on one of the walls? If there is, it will be up high, at one end of the room. The picture will probably relate to the local economy: agricultural or industrial scenes are the most common subjects.

If there is a mural, please walk over close to it and check for two things: 1) Was the mural painted on canvas and then glued onto the wall, or was it painted directly on the wall in fresco technique? If you can't tell the difference, don't worry; it's not that important. 2) Is the mural signed? If it is, make a note of the artist's name and the date (if any) on the mural.

Next, i want you to go outside and look at the building's facade. Are there cast concrete plaques high on the wall depicting transportation motifs, such as planes, locomotives, or ships? Is there a date plaque near one lower corner telling when the post office was built? (If so, note the date.)

There may be two standing lamps outside, flanking the front door. Are they Art Deco style, with metal discs and frosted glass?

Go back inside and look up at the ceiling lamps. Are they Art Deco style metal and glass?

Walk over to one of the handy writing tables provided in the post office. Take a good look at this table: is it made of wood or metal?

Okay, now get out the postcard and write down the following information, filling in the blanks:

I am in the post office in (city, state, zipcode).

This post office (does/does not) have a mural in it.

The mural is (canvas/ fresco).

The mural depicts (describe mural).

It is signed by (name) and dated (date).

There (are/are no) "transportation plaques" outside.

There (is/is no) date plaque (give date if there is one).

The exterior lamps (are/are not) Art Deco style.

The interior lamps (are/are not) Art Deco style.

The writing table here is (wood/metal).

My name is (your name).

Send my free Eclipse comic book to (your address).

That's all there is to it! Mail your postcard to Eclipse and i will send you a free comic book. You can fill out cards on as many post offices as you can inspect and earn a free comic for each report! If you have complete runs of some Eclipse titles and don't want duplicates, let me know so i can send you a book from a series you don't already have.

Why do i want a report on your local post office? Well, during the Depression, the government hired some great artists to produce murals under the Works Progress Administration. Most of the murals were installed in post offices. Dean and i need to know where they are so we can photograph them on our next cross-country trip. We also need to know where they are NOT, so we don't waste time looking for them in the wrong places.

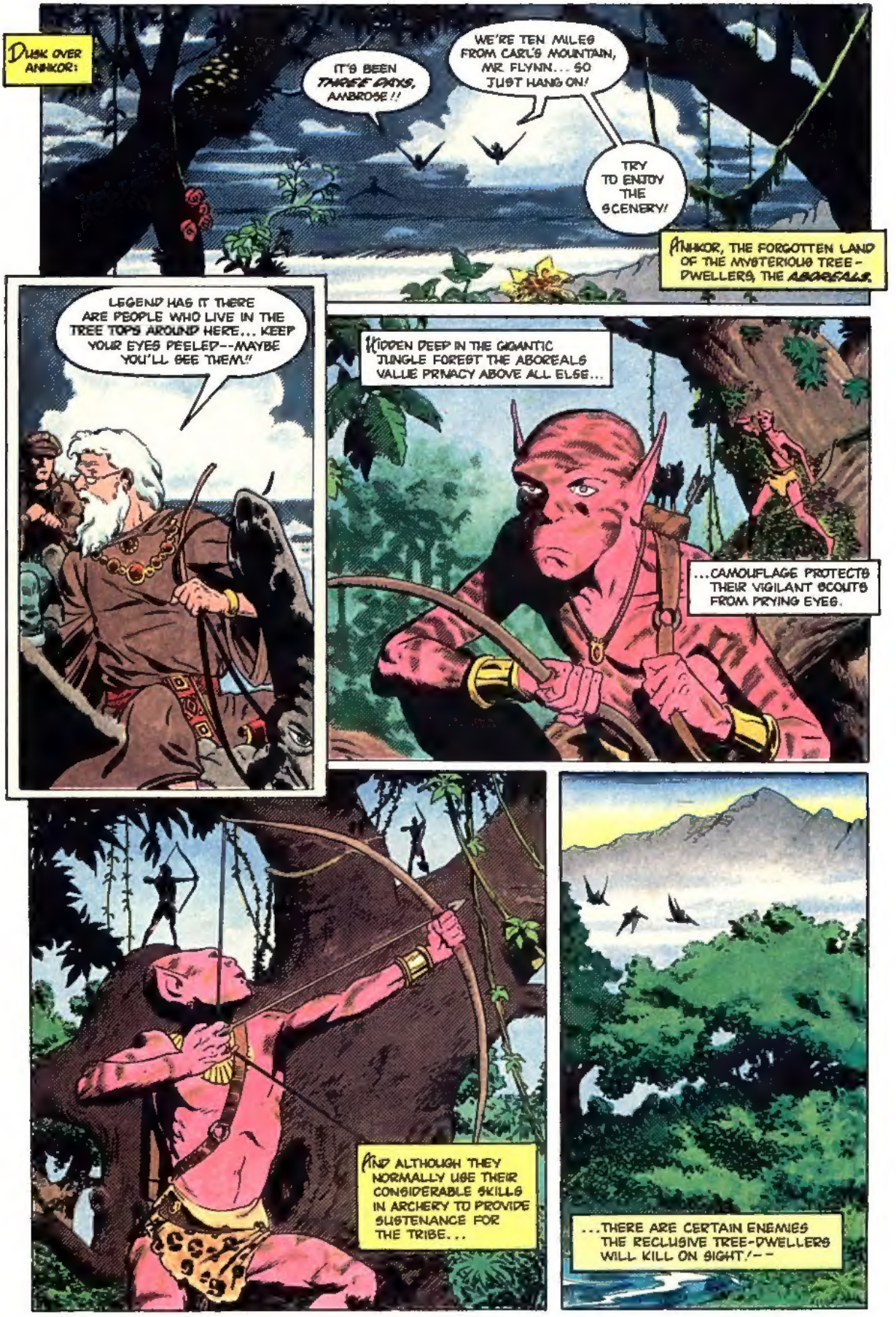
Thank you for your help. I appreciate it.

catherine yronwode

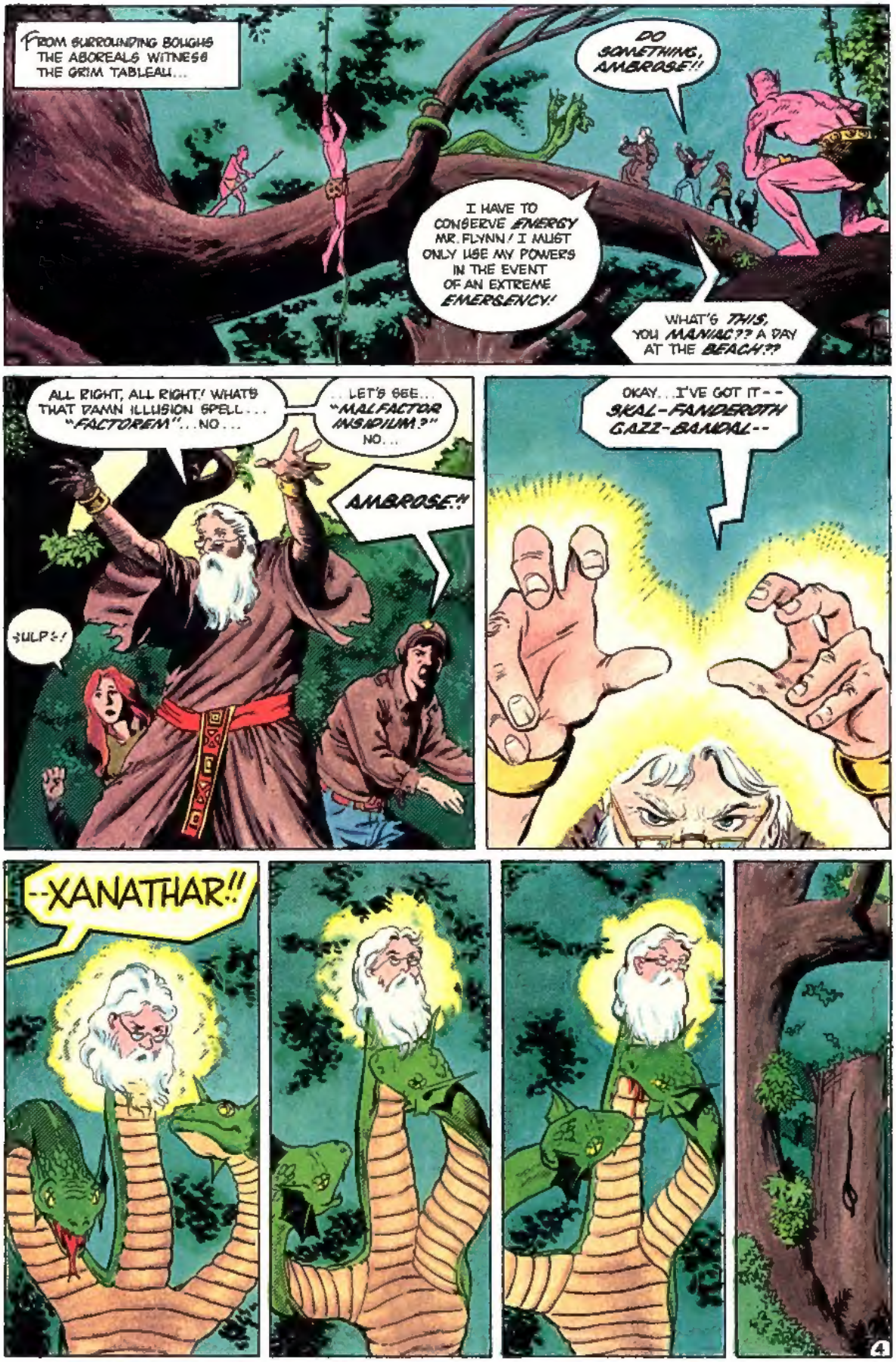
LOST PLANET™ no. 4, December 1987. Published bi-monthly by Eclipse Comics, P.O. Box 1099, Forestville, CA 95436. Letitia Glozer, Editor. Catherine Yronwode, Editor-in-Chief. Dean Mullaney, Publisher. Lost Planet: story and art ©1987 Bo Hampton. "Devil's Eye," story ©1987 Bunny Hampton. Art ©1987 Scott Hampton. Lost Planet TM Bo Hampton. All other material ©1987 Eclipse Enterprises, Inc. All rights reserved. Film by SM Graphics. For licensing information contact Dean Mullaney.

HOWEVER, *THESE* DRAGON RIDERS APPEAR DIFFERENT TO THE CURIOUS ABOREALS AND THE TRIBE'S LEADER INSISTS UPON RESCUE

Story - Bo Hampton and Bunny Hampton-Mack · Lettering - Tracy Hampton · Coloring - Tom Littlejohn · Editing - Letitia Glozer


DUSK OVER ANNKOR:
IT'S BEEN THREE DAYS, AMBROSE!!
WE'RE TEN MILES FROM CARL'S MOUNTAIN, MR. FLYNN... SO JUST HANG ON!
TRY TO ENJOY THE SCENERY!
ANNKOR, THE FORGOTTEN LAND OF THE MYSTERIOUS TREE-DWELLERS, THE ABOREALS.
LEGEND HAS IT THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE TREE TOPS AROUND HERE... KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED--MAYBE YOU'LL SEE THEM!!
HIDDEN DEEP IN THE GIGANTIC JUNGLE FOREST THE ABOREALS VALUE PRIVACY ABOVE ALL ELSE...
...CAMOUFLAGE PROTECTS THEIR VIGILANT SCOUTS FROM PRYING EYES.
AND ALTHOUGH THEY NORMALLY USE THEIR CONSIDERABLE SKILLS IN ARCHERY TO PROVIDE SUSTENANCE FOR THE TRIBE...
...THERE ARE CERTAIN ENEMIES THE RECLUSIVE TREE-DWELLERS WILL KILL ON SIGHT!--

FLYNN AND COMPANY ARE REUNITED AND DIVESTED OF THEIR WEAPONRY AS THE THRASHING DRAGON MOUNTS ARE DISPATCHED...
...AND CURIOSITY OVER THE FLAME-HAIRED GIRL SEEMS TO BE ALL THAT STANDS BETWEEN THE HAPLESS ADVENTURERS AND A SIMILAR FATE.
KLANN?
SKELL EM TU?
ROMNEY, YOUR POPULARITY AMAZES ME.
CHE?
I GUESS THEY DON'T CAPTURE MANY RED-HEADED DRAGON RIDERS!
HISSSSSSSSSSSSSS
MAGANDI! EYAA!!
MAGANDI, THE THREE-HEADED SERPENT DEVIL! THE ABOREALS FLEE IN MINDLESS TERROR FROM A CREATURE THEY BELIEVE TO BE AN IMMORTAL GOD OF EVIL!
CALMLY, AMBROSE REASSURES THE TRIO...
HOLY--
...ER ...DON'T PANIC!
3


FROM SURROUNDING BOUGHS THE ABOREALS WITNESS THE GRIM TABLEAU...
DO SOMETHING, AMBROSE!!
I HAVE TO CONSERVE ENERGY MR. FLYNN / I MUST ONLY USE MY POWERS IN THE EVENT OF AN EXTREME EMERGENCY!
WHAT'S THIS, YOU MANIAC?? A DAY AT THE BEACH??
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT! WHAT'S THAT DAMN ILLUSION SPELL... "FACTOREM"... NO...
...LET'S SEE... "MALFACTOR INSADILUM?" NO...
AMBROSE!!
YULP!!
OKAY...I'VE GOT IT-- SKAL-FANDEROTH GAZZ-BAANDAL--
--XANATHAR!!
4

NOT TOO BRIGHT, HUH?
AMBROSE, IF YOU CAN DO THAT...
EMERGENCIES ONLY...I HAVE TO CONSERVE MY MAGICAL ENERGY TO FACE A MUCH MORE POWERFUL ENEMY--ZORRIN!!
ZORRIN! PFAGGN!!
HE'S NO FRIEND OF THEIRS EITHER, I SUPPOSE!
THAT SNAKE MUST HAVE TERRORIZED THESE PEOPLE FOR YEARS...
SLAN MAGANDI!!
MAGANDI MORTERA..!!
HEY! I COULD GET USED TO THIS!
AS NIGHT FALLS...
NOW, THIS IS MORE LIKE IT!
5

YOU SEEM TO HAVE A WAY WITH MONSTERS, AMBROSE. WELL DONE!
TRUE... NOT BAD FOR A MAN VERGING ON A HUNDRED
A HUNDRED!
QUITE. FLYNN, YOU HAVEN'T BEEN HERE LONG ENOUGH TO LEARN THIS, BUT PEOPLE ON THIS PLANET SEEM TO LIVE ABOUT THREE TIMES AS LONG AS WE DO. I'VE BEEN HERE TWENTY-FOUR YEARS AND I'VE AGED, PHYSICALLY, ABOUT SEVEN OR EIGHT.
SOMETHING ABOUT THE WATER, MAYBE...
TWENTY-FOUR YEARS! GOD! AND PEOPLE ON EARTH ARE STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU. ENDLESS THEORIZING...
GOOD. I SHOULDN'T LIKE TO BE ENTIRELY FORGOTTEN. THIS IS QUITE REFRESHING-A LITTLE LIKE CHAMPAGNE.
LOOK, WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING CONSTRUCTIVE UNTIL MORNING, AMBROSE, AND I HAVE EASILY A THOUSAND QUESTIONS I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU, SO--
I DETEST INTERVIEWS... MR. FLYNN, BUT I'LL TELL YOU WHAT MY LIFE'S BEEN LIKE HERE, IF YOU WISH.
I WISH.
THE FIRST THING I DID WHEN I GOT HERE WAS HEAD FOR THE DENSEST POPULATION CENTER. I ASSUMED I MIGHT FIND HELP THAT WAY...
...BUT THE ONLY HELP I GOT WAS A FREE TRIP TO THE ZORRIN CASTLE COURTESY OF THE DRAGON RIDERS.
I DIDN'T LEAVE THERE FOR ALMOST EIGHT YEARS, AND I WAS FORTUNATE TO LEAVE AT ALL, BUT THAT COMES LATER...
6

"INITIALLY, THE OLD KING SANDOKAR--THE FATHER OF THE PRESENT COUNT ZORRIN--VIEWED ME AS A NOVELTY AND KEPT ME AROUND AS A SORT OF COURT WIT, A PET. FOR THE FIRST TWO YEARS, I WAS LOCKED UP AT NIGHT AND ALLOWED OUT THE NEXT DAY ONLY IF THE KING WISHED IT.
"SO, SINCE I FIND CONFINEMENT INTOLERABLE, IT WAS IN MY BEST INTERESTS TO MAKE MY COMPANY ATTRACTIVE TO ZORRIN, WHICH I DID.
"I CONCOCTED THE MOST OUTRAGEOUS STORIES TO TELL HIM AND MAKE HIM BELIEVE IN MY UNDYING LOYALTY. BY THE THIRD YEAR, I WAS ONLY UNDER 'HOUSE' ARREST.'
"THE KING OCCASIONALLY ACTED ODD DURING OUR EARLY ACQUAINTANCE--HE'D SUDDENLY BEGIN TO RAVE FOR NO APPARENT REASON.
"IT WASN'T UNTIL MY THIRD YEAR THERE THAT I FOUND OUT WHY.
"THE LOTUS WELL.
"THERE'S A WELL IN THAT CASTLE THAT BUBBLES UNCEASINGLY WITH THE VILEST GREEN LIQUID IMAGINABLE."
"AN UNDERGROUND SPRING?"
"NO, MR. FLYNN... I DON'T KNOW HOW TO DESCRIBE IT EXCEPT TO SAY THAT IT SEEMS TO BE THE ESSENCE OF EVIL, BUT IN A LIQUID FORM.
"TAKEN IN MODERATION, IT ENHANCES THE EVIL TALENTS OF THE ZORRINS, BUT ANYONE WHO CONSUMES IT IN GREATER QUANTITIES CAN BE SUBJUGATED TO THEIR WILL. MOST OF THE ZORRIN STAFF IS KEPT UNDER CONTROL THAT WAY.
"BUT THE KING WAS BECOMING ADDICTED TO IT AND UNBALANCED BY ITS EFFECTS.
"IN HIS LESS LUCID MOMENTS, WHICH OCCURRED MORE OFTEN AS THE ADDICTION GREW WORSE, HE THOUGHT I WAS AN AMAZING ASSORTMENT OF OTHER PEOPLE. ONCE HE EVEN THOUGHT I WAS HIS DEAD WIFE...
"... AND CONFESSED EVERY ONE OF HIS ADULTEROUS AFFAIRS TO ME IN GRAPHIC DETAIL.
7

"SINCE HE WOULD TOLERATE NO ONE BUT ME AROUND HIM ON THESE OCCASIONS, I USED THEM TO FULL ADVANTAGE. ONCE WHEN HE THOUGHT I WAS HIS OLD TUTOR...
"...I REDUCED HIM TO SCHOOLBOY STATUS AND MADE HIM RECITE ALL HE KNEW OF HIS PLANET'S HISTORY.
"THIS WAS ONCE A VERY DIFFERENT PLANET. IRIEL, IT WAS CALLED--A HIGHLY ADVANCED WORLD. THEIR WARS WERE PRODIGIOUS AFFAIRS. THESE PEOPLE DIDN'T FIGHT HAND-TO-HAND; THEY FOUGHT PLANET-TO-PLANET."
"WHAAAT?"
"APPARENTLY, MR. FLYNN, PEOPLE FROM ONE PLANET COULD ATTACK PEOPLE ON ANOTHER PLANET."
"YOU DREAMED THIS, AMBROSE."
"MAYBE THE KING DID. AT ANY RATE, IRIEL SUFFERED A TREMENDOUS DEFEAT THREE CENTURIES AGO; SCIENTISTS AND ALL THEIR WORKS VANISHED--ALL PROGRESS WAS CHECKED, AND THE ZORRINS COULDN'T HAVE BEEN HAPPIER. THEY TOOK OVER, AND THE MAGIC THEY HAD MERELY DABBLED IN BECAME A POWER NONE COULD CONTEND WITH ONCE THE WELL WAS UNCOVERED.
"BUT IT WAS ANOTHER OF THE KING'S LITTLE REMINISCENCES THAT ULTIMATELY HELPED ME ESCAPE...
"LATE IN MY THIRD YEAR THERE HE BEGAN TO RAMBLE ON ABOUT AN OLD LIBRARY SOMEWHERE IN THE BARRICADED WEST TOWER, A PLACE FULL OF GHOSTS AND MOST HIDEOUS EVIL, HE CLAIMED.
"I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE GOT OFF DERIDING EVIL, BUT THEN MOST PEOPLE ARE BLIND TO THEIR OWN DEFECTS."
IT TOOK ME THE BETTER PART OF A YEAR OF LATE-NIGHT EXPLORING TO FIND THAT ROOM...
...BUT A LIFE-LONG FASCINATION WITH THE SUPERNATURAL WAS SUFFICIENT INSPIRATION.
"THAT WING COULDN'T HAVE BEEN USED IN EASILY A HUNDRED YEARS, MAYBE MORE, AND I HAD IT ALL TO MYSELF IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.
"THE STAFF WAS TERRIFIED OF IT."
8

" . AND I COULD SEE WHY *MADEOLIS* EVIDENCE OF *TORTURE*. DISMEMBERED HANDS DECORATED THE ARMS OF CHAIRS .

"I LATER FOUND OUT THAT THESE WERE THE REMAINS OF SCIENTISTS WHO HADN'T ESCAPED BEFORE IRIEL'S DEFEAT "

"... CLUTCHING THEM AS IF THE OWNER HAD GOTTEN UP TO GET A DRINK AND LEFT HIS HANDS IN HIS HURRY.

HOW COULD YOU BE SURE? CONSIDERING THE KING'S DRUG PROBLEM, HOW COULD YOU ASSUME HE WAS TELLING YOU THE TRUTH?

"BECAUSE HE DIDN'T TELL ME.. KENNAN DID -- ONE OF THE SCIENTISTS "

"BUT I THOUGHT ALL THE SCIENTISTS WERE LONG DEAD!"

"HE *WAS*, MR FLYNN "

THIS IS GETTING *DEEP*! EVERYBODY GET OUT YOUR HIP BOOTS

IT'S ALL QUITE TRUE.

"HE COMMUNICATED WITH ME THROUGH A MIRROR

" THROUGH THE SKELETONS OF HIS FORMER COLLEAGUES WHO HAD BEEN TORTURED AS THEY RUNG HELPLESS AND STARVING .

" AND EVEN THROUGH THE PRESERVED HEAD OF ONE OF THEM .

" THE VOICE SEEMED TO EMANATE FROM EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE.

"I WAS GUIDED TO THE BOOKS ON MAGIC, AND NIGHT AFTER NIGHT I PORED OVER CRUMBLING OLD VOLUMES OF THE NECROMANCER'S ART"

YOU CANNOT FIGHT ZORRIN WITH *MY* POWERS, BUT YOU CAN WITH HIS OWN...

"KENNAN KNEW HE COULDN'T REVENGE HIMSELF ON THE ZORRINS BY TEACHING ME HIS OWN KNOWLEDGE, BECAUSE I HAD NO RESOURCES TO BUILD WEAPONS OR MACHINES...

"...BUT WITH MAGIC I MIGHT STAND A CHANCE... SO I LEARNED ALL I COULD IN THE NEXT FOUR YEARS."

AND YOU ESCAPED BY USING MAGIC? AND YOU CAN USE MAGIC TO GET US HOME?

ONE THING AT A TIME NO, I DIDN'T USE MAGIC TO ESCAPE FROM THE *COURT*. I HAD TO KILL THE KING TO DO THAT...

WHAT? HOW?

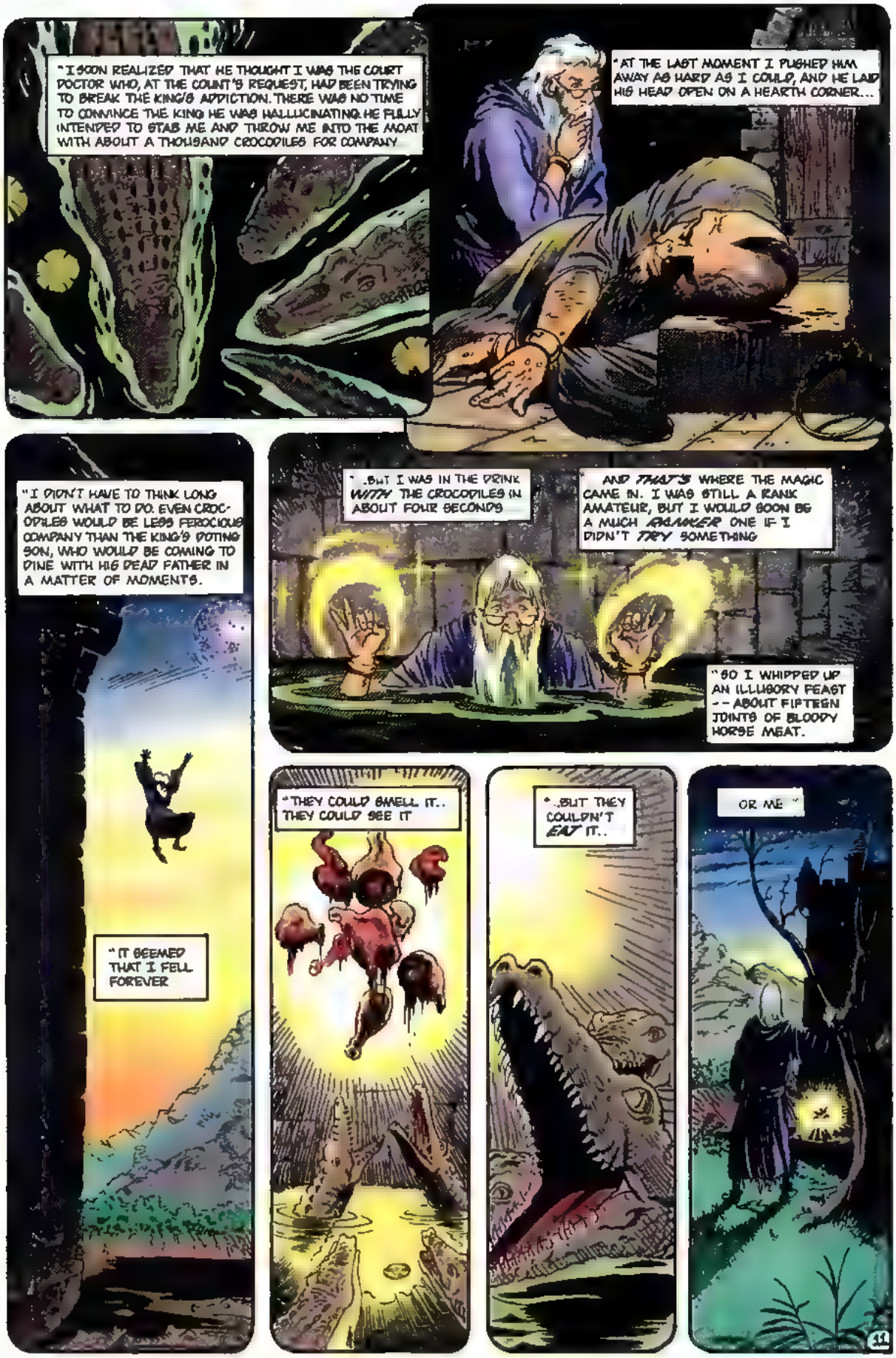
I DIDN'T PLAN TO KILL HIM, HE WAS, HIMSELF, A MUCH MORE POWERFUL MAGICIAN AND *MIGHT* AT ANY MOMENT HAVE BECOME LUCID ENOUGH TO USE HIS POWERS. I WOULDN'T HAVE RISKED ATTACKING HIM.

"BUT ONE NIGHT, WHEN HIS WHOLE DAY'S DIET HAD CONSISTED OF NOTHING BUT THE 'LOTUS' DRINK, HE BECAME AGGRESSIVE "

AND YOU WOULD TAKE MY POWER *FROM* ME, WOULD YOU?

"I THOUGHT HE'D FOUND EVIDENCE OF MY 'NIGHT CLASSES'..."

YOU WOULD BAR ME FROM THE PATH TO THE GREATEST POWER... BUT YOU WILL TAKE THE PATH TO A WATERY DEATH FIRST, DOCTOR!!


"I SOON REALIZED THAT HE THOUGHT I WAS THE COURT DOCTOR WHO, AT THE COUNT'S REQUEST, HAD BEEN TRYING TO BREAK THE KING'S ADDICTION. THERE WAS NO TIME TO CONVINCE THE KING HE WAS HALLUCINATING. HE FULLY INTENDED TO STAB ME AND THROW ME INTO THE MOAT WITH ABOUT A THOUSAND CROCODILES FOR COMPANY.
"AT THE LAST MOMENT I PUSHED HIM AWAY AS HARD AS I COULD, AND HE LAID HIS HEAD OPEN ON A HEARTH CORNER...
"I DIDN'T HAVE TO THINK LONG ABOUT WHAT TO DO. EVEN CROCODILES WOULD BE LESS FEROCIOUS COMPANY THAN THE KING'S DOTING SON, WHO WOULD BE COMING TO DINE WITH HIS DEAD FATHER IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS.
"...BUT I WAS IN THE DRINK WITH THE CROCODILES IN ABOUT FOUR SECONDS
AND THAT'S WHERE THE MAGIC CAME IN. I WAS STILL A RANK AMATEUR, BUT I WOULD SOON BE A MUCH BRAWLIER ONE IF I DIDN'T TRY SOMETHING
"SO I WHIPPED UP AN ILLUSORY FEAST -- ABOUT FIFTEEN JOINTS OF BLOODY HORSE MEAT.
"IT SEEMED THAT I FELL FOREVER
"THEY COULD SMELL IT.. THEY COULD SEE IT
"...BUT THEY COULDN'T EAT IT..
OR ME "
11

AFTER I ESCAPED, I WANDERED, SETTLED WHEREVER I COULD, AND SHARPENED MY MAGIC TO EVADE COUNT ZORRIN'S DETECTION, BUT HE GROWS STRONGER ALL THE TIME AND IF I DON'T SOON RETURN TO EARTH, HE'LL UNDOUBTEDLY FIND ME.
AND YOU CAN USE MAGIC TO TRANSPORT US?
NO, SCIENCE THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, IRIEL'S SCIENTISTS DEVELOPED AN ESCAPE CHAMBER TO GET FROM HERE TO EARTH, IN CASE IT EVER PROVED NECESSARY.
BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, KENNAN'S KNOWLEDGE WAS BASED ON 300-YEAR-OLD FACTS WHICH NO LONGER HOLD ENTIRELY TRUE
THERE ARE TWO EMERALD CHAMBERS--ONE ON EACH PLANET YOU'VE SEEN THEM
BOY, HAVE I!
WELL, THE CHAMBER HERE WAS INTENDED TO WORK BY MEANS OF GENERATORS THAT PRODUCE UNIMAGINABLE AMOUNTS OF ENERGY AND THEY DID WORK--THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO BUT SINCE THEN, EMERALDS HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM EARTH'S RECEPTION CHAMBER, AND THE SYSTEM IS APPARENTLY UNBALANCED
, NOW THAT WE HAVE CRATER'S MEDALLION--THANK YOU, MAX--WE SHOULD HAVE ALL THE EMERALDS FINALLY THE BALANCE CAN BE RESTORED WE CAN GET BACK TO EARTH NOW, PROVIDED WE CAN FIND CARL'S CAVE.

THE PEREMPTORY SLAYING OF THEIR DRAGON MOUNTS FORCES AMBROSE TO DEVISE A DIFFERENT MODE OF TRANSPORT

. . .

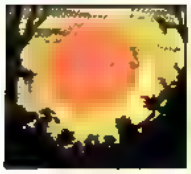
SO THE GREAT RAFT-BUILDING ENTERPRISE BEGINS.

THE ABOREALS RESPECTFULLY KEEP THEIR DISTANCE AS THEY OBSERVE THE STRANGE TRIO GETTING ABOUT SOME CURIOUS PROCEDURE

AND QUITE ORIGINAL THOUGHT
OWW!
KWMMP!
STRANGE BEHAVIOR, TO BE SURE, BUT THE ABOREALS ARE CONFIDENT SOME GRAND DESIGN WILL BECOME OBVIOUS.

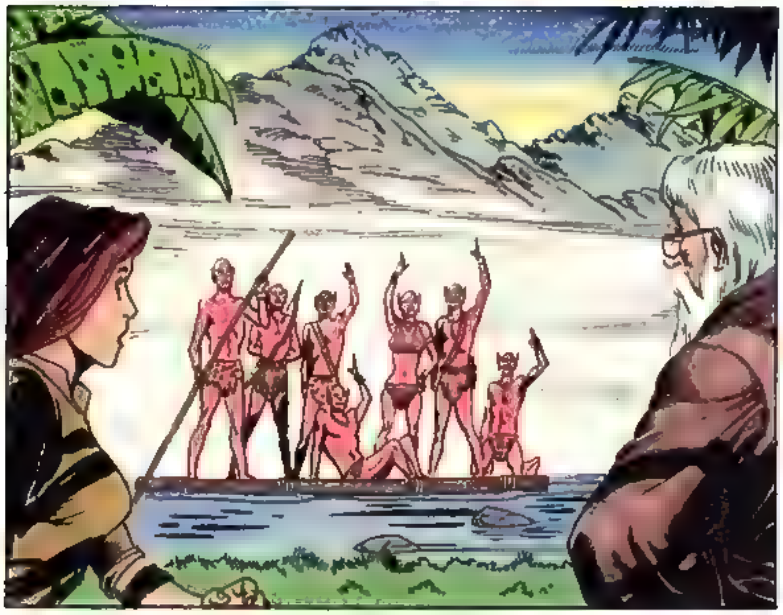
OKAY, AMBROSE, +HUFF+. WE'VE GOT THE STUFF+PUFF+. NOW ZAP IT TOGETHER AND LET'S GO!
TUSH-- MAGIC ONLY IN EMERGENCIES, REMEMBER?! SIMPLE BACKWOODS INGENUITY IS ALL THAT'S REQUIRED HERE.
LET'S SEE THOSE VINES, GIRL
OF COURSE, THE ABOREALS MUSE, WHY WASTE THE STURDIER GAMBA CLINGERS WHEN EVEN THE FLIMSY HALF DEAD URU-BAKKA CAN BE MADE STRONG WITH MAGIC!!
SEE WHAT I MEAN, FLYNN? SIMPLEST THING IN THE WORLD.
AMBROSE, I DON'T THI--
QUIET, BOY! YOU'RE TALKING TO A WOODSMAN OF THE FIRST ORDER!
THERE.
UH. IT FEELS KINDA LOOSE!
NONSENSE! LET'S CLIMB ABOARD. THE DAY'S WASTING.
NO MAGIC, HUH?
NONE NEEDED, MY BOY--CLIMB ABOARD! LET CAPTAIN BIERCE DO THE THINKING AND YOU'LL NEVER GO WRONG!
THE ABOREALS ARE AMAZED THIS IS NO GRAND CREATION.
14

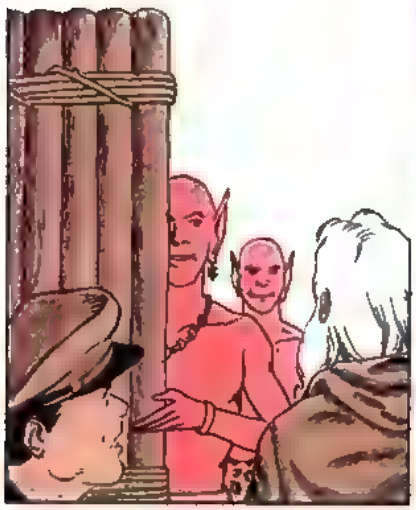
I TOLD YOU NOW WERE OFF AND RUNNING! WAVE GOODBYE TO OUR FRIENDS, TROOPS!
THIS IS NO MAGIC
HEY, AMORISE!! THE VINES ARE BREAKING UP IN THE WATER!
WELL, TIE 'EM BACK TOGETHER, DAMMIT!!
I'M TRYING I .
I'M SLIPPING!
THE MAGIC-MAN IS NO BUILDER OF RAFTS
THE LOGS YOU CUT :HUFF: WERE MUCH TOO :PUFF: SLIPPERY. MUST I DO EVERYTHING AROUND HERE??
WHAAAT??
BUT THEN WHY SHOULD THE WISE MAN CONCERN HIMSELF WITH SMALL MATTERS.
. HIS MIND IS TOO FULL OF SPELLS AND GREAT DREAMS.



THE SUN MAKES A LANDWID DESCENT AS THE WEARY GROUP BEGINS THEIR TASK ANEW. .

NO WAY! THIS TIME YOU CHOP THE VINES!
NO PROBLEM! THAT'S THE EASY PART!
IT'S GETTING DARK ANYWAY-- WE'D BEST TRY AGAIN IN THE MORNING





HAVING GRUMPILY ACCEPTED THE GIFT FROM THE ABOREALS, AMBROSE REITERATES HIS POSITION ON THE MATTER
ANYBODY CAN BUILD A RAFT IF THEY WERE RAISED IN THE JUNGLE
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE WOODSMAN OF THE FIRST ORDER?
I KILLED THAT THREE-HEADED MONSTER, DIDN'T I?

NO ONE WILL HAVE ANY OF THE DELICIOUS LOOKING MUSHROOMS?
NO, THANKS-- ROMNEY PICKED THEM FOR YOU--I HATE THE NASTY THINGS
I'LL GET THE WINE
LET ME
NONSENSE, STAY PUT, GIRL-- YOU'VE DONE MORE THAN ENOUGH!
HERE WE GO--
--DAMN!
CRRASSH
HOW CLUMSY OF ME . HERE, I'LL DO--
I'LL GET THIS UP--JUST SIT DOWN AND EAT!
MISS RIFKIN, IT APPEARS I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO LIKES MUSHROOMS AFTER ALL--
HUH?
SLURRP! SLUPP!
MAX!! DON'T!!!
WHAT'S GOIN' ON?

ROMNEY!!!
:UFF:
LOOK OUT!!
CHUNK
DO YOU MIND TELLIN' ME WHAT THE HELL'S GOIN' ON?
UH--N-NOTHING I THINK THE MUSHROOMS WERE BAD, THAT'S ALL/ I REALIZED THAT VARIETY COULD BE DEADLY... WE HAVE TO HELP MAX!!!
AMBROSE MADE HIM SPIT OUT MOST OF WHAT HE WAS EATING.. HE'LL BE OKAY BUT, ROMNEY, YOU KNEW AMBROSE WAS THE ONLY ONE OF US THAT WANTED MUSHROOMS FOR DINNER
FLYNN, DO ME A FAVOR-- JUST STAY AWAY FROM ME I WANT TO BE BY MYSELF, ALL RIGHT??
HEY! NO PROBLEM!
THAT'S FINE, ROMNEY
JUST DON'T SPOIL ANYTHING. AMBROSE IS MY TICKET OUT OF THIS DAMN PLACE.
18

WHAT WAS SHE TRYING TO DO TO ME, FLYNN? THOSE MUSHROOMS MUST HAVE BEEN POISONOUS! THIS SILLY APE SAVED MY LIFE!
SHE DIDN'T REALIZE IT 'TIL MAX ATE THEM
HOW CONVENIENT
EYAAIIIEE!! TYLER!! HELP!!!
CRIPES! DRAGON RIDER... HE'S GOT ROMNEY!
GOOD RIDDANCE
AMBROSE, WE GOTTA SAVE HER!
UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES!!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND
"... SHE HAS THE LAST EMERALD!"
19

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE!

FOR KIRYL AND HIS PEOPLE, IT WAS A FEAR-FILLED DECADE THAT FOLLOWED AMBROSE BIERCE'S DISAPPEARANCE FROM THE ANDES IN 1914. HIS LAST ACT AMONG THEM HAD BEEN A SHOWDOWN WITH THE DEMONIC HERALD, BRINGER OF DESTRUCTION AND PAIN. THE HERALD HAD RETURNED AT INTERVALS SINCE THEN AND WOULD INEVITABLY COME AGAIN, DEALING DEATH. HOW COULD THEY FIGHT HIM?

IF THERE WERE AN ANSWER, IT LAY, THE VILLAGERS FEARED, IN *ANOTHER* CONFRONTATION SOMEONE HAD TO ENTER AND *WIN* A DEADLY CONTEST--A STAREDOWN MATCH AGAINST *THE DEVIL'S EYE*.

DIM NY, I AM LOATH TO LET YOU GO EVEN IF THESE VISIONS OF YOURS *ARE* PROPHECIES, WHAT CHANCE IS THERE OF FINDING AMBROSE AFTER TEN YEARS? YOU COULD WANDER AROUND THE PASSAGES OF THE EMERALD CAVE FOR WEEKS WITHOUT FINDING A CLUE!

WE ALL LIVE HERE IN CONTINUAL FEAR, KIRYL. SOMEONE HAS TO FIND AN ANSWER, AND THE VISIONS CAME TO *ME*--NO ONE ELSE. I BELIEVE AMBROSE STILL LIVES. IF I CAN FIND HIM, I KNOW THAT HE CAN DESTROY THE HERALD. THE VISIONS HAVE BECOME *URGENT*. I *MUST* GO

Story
Bunny Hampton-Mack
Art
Scott Hampton

VERY WELL, DIMINY VERY WELL.

IF I CAN'T FIND AMBROSE, PERHAPS I CAN SOMEHOW GET THIS MESSAGE TO HIM. DO YOU WISH TO ADD ANYTHING TO WHAT I'VE WRITTEN?

NO. BUT WAIT ...SE THIS QUIVER--T HAS A FALSE BOTTOM WHERE YOU CAN SAFE-GUARD THE MESSAGE IN THE WRONG HANDS, THAT PAPER MIGHT SPELL GRAVE DANGER FOR AMBROSE *AND* FOR US. KEEP IT HIDDEN AND SEND IT ONLY AS A LAST RESORT. GOOD LUCK.

ONE THING, KIRYL. I DARE NOT TELL MY HEADSTRONG DAUGHTER THE TRUTH; ROMNEY WOULD FOLLOW ME INTO ANY DANGER. I'LL TELL HER THAT I HAVE TO GO ON A .A SPECIAL *HUNT*. ALONE AND THAT SHE *MUST* STAY WITH HER AUNT. PLEASE WATCH OVER HER FOR ME.

1

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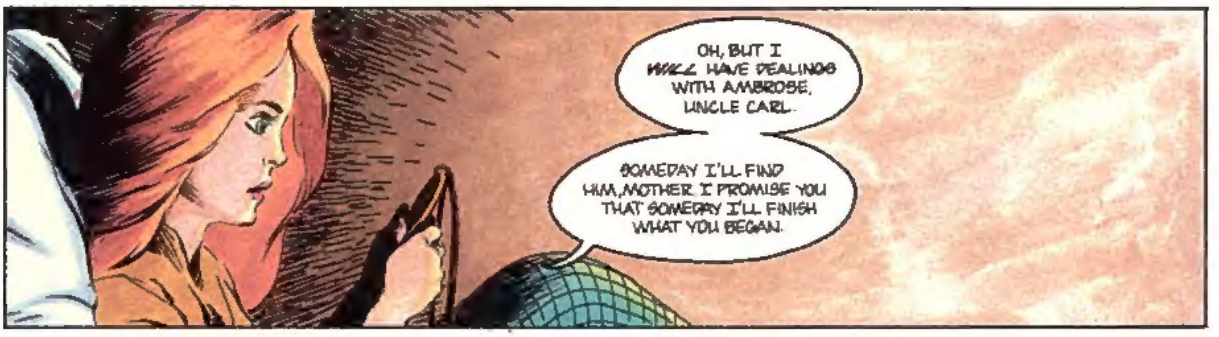
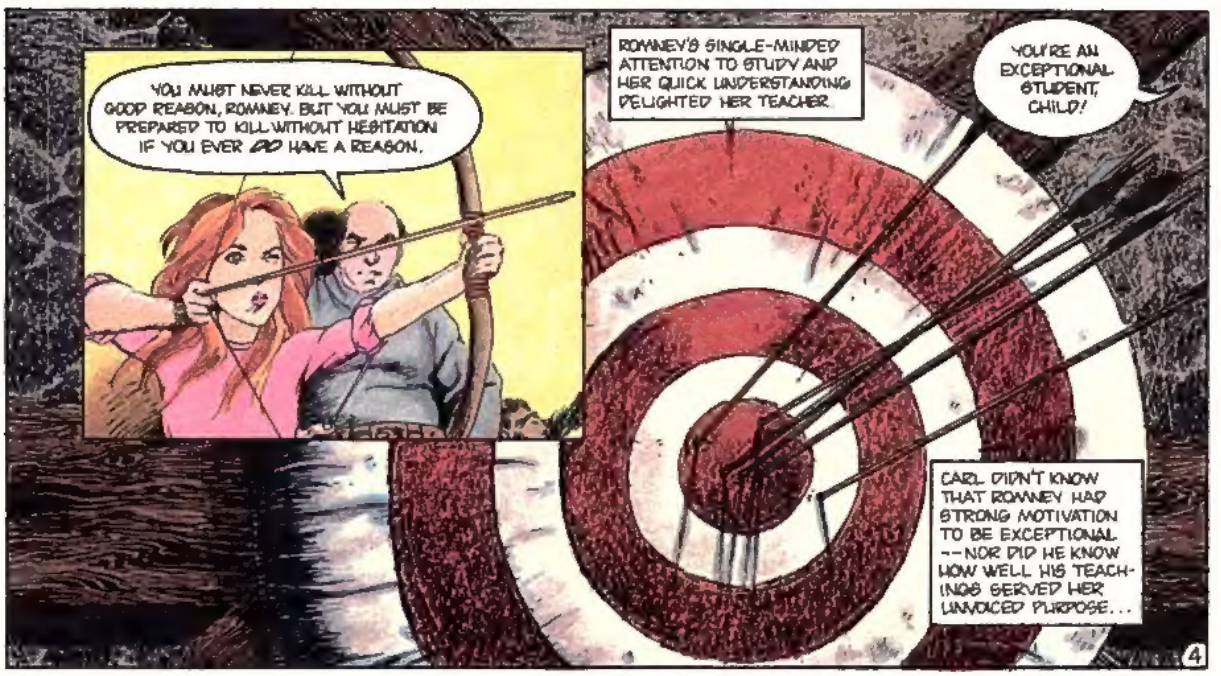
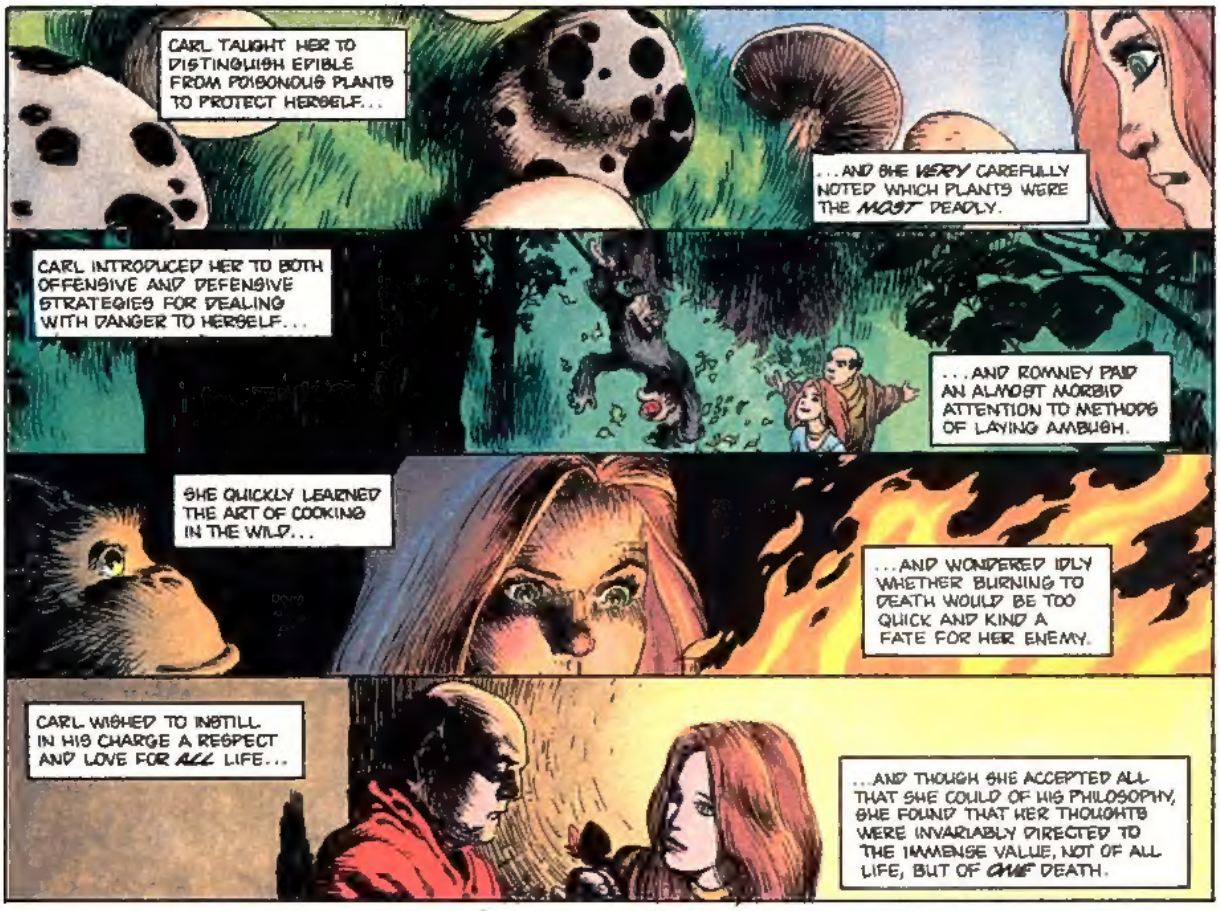
ROMNEY'S WRETCHEDNESS AT HER MOTHER'S DEPARTURE ISSUED FROM ITS USUAL VENT IN AN ELEVEN-YEAR-OLD.
MOTHER'S LEA-LEA-LEEAAVING ME, MAX! WHO-WHO'LL TAKE CARE OF HER? WHO'LL BRUSH HER HAIR FOR HER IN THE MOR-MOR-NING??
INDISPUTABLE LOGIC HAD COME TO THE STRICKEN ROMNEY'S AID...
SHE DIDN'T THINK OF THAT, MAX! I KNOW SHE'LL WANT ME TO DO THAT! I ALWAYS DO IT. SHE JUST FORGOT! LET'S GO!
MOMENTS LATER
MOTHER! MOTHER! WAIT!
ROMNEY'S TERRIFIED WARNING SCREAMS WERE SWALLOWED UP BY A CALLOUS WIND, AS HER MOTHER WALKED HEEDLESSLY ON IN DEATH'S PATH
HELPLESSLY, SHE WATCHED AS THE AVALANCHE REACHED HER MOTHER.
MOTHER, I'M GOING FOR HELP! DON'T BE AFRAID!
NO. NO AMBROSE. FIND HIM. THE DESTROYER. HE'S THE ONE THAT. GO, ROMNEY --NOW.
I'LL FIND HIM, MOTHER I WILL...
AND I'LL KILL HIM."
2

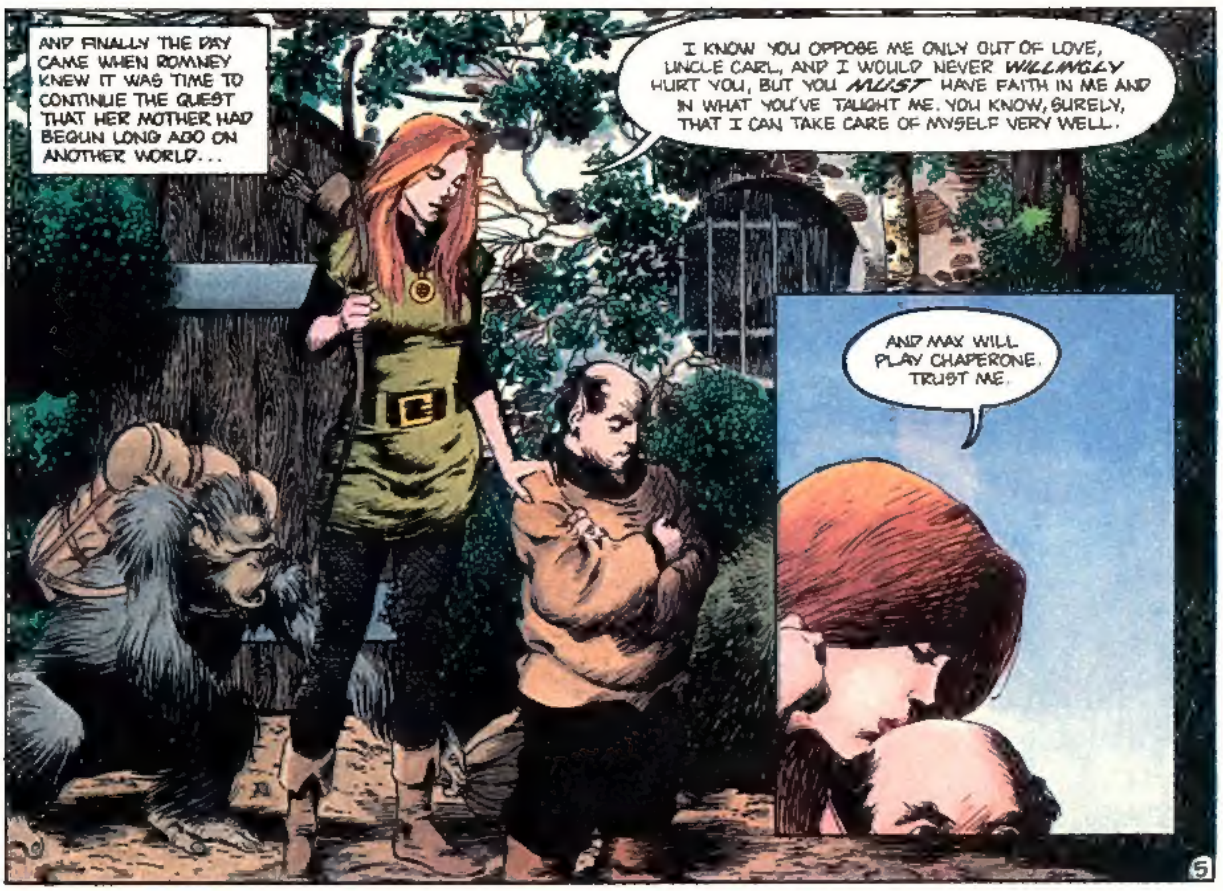
HOARSE WITH HOURS OF CRYING, ROMNEY NEVERTHELESS PERSISTED IN SCREAMING FOR THE LONG-ABSENT AMBROSE...
YOU HORRIBLE, STUPID, UGLY, TERRIBLE, HORRIBLE, OLD COWARD! COME OUT! I'LL KILL YOU FORTY-TWO TIMES!
THERE'S NO ONE HERE, MAX. MOTHER WAS WRON--
POK!
HELP!
GO GREET OUR VISITOR, GERTIE, I'M BUSY.
BLAM!!
SCRAANK!
WELL!
WHO ARE YOU? WHERE ARE WE?
HOW CAME YOU TO KNOW OUR LANGUAGE, CHILD? AND WHO ARE YOU?
IT'S MY LANGUAGE!! I'M ROMNEY RIFKIND AND IF THAT MONSTER HURTS MAX, I'LL KILL IT. AND I'LL KILL YOU, TOO, IF YOU DON'T LET HIM GO!
MY, MY! YOU'LL BE UP HALF THE NIGHT WITH ALL THAT KILLING. I WANT TO HELP YOU.
AS FOR LETTING YOU GO, I COULDN'T SEND A NEARLY HYSTERICAL CHILD AND HER OBVIOUSLY SIMPLE-MINDED PET INTO ZORRIN'S CLUTCHES.
CALM DOWN AND LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING OF THE PLANET YOU'VE COME TO. YOU CAN GET TO THE PART WITH THE KILLING LATER.
3

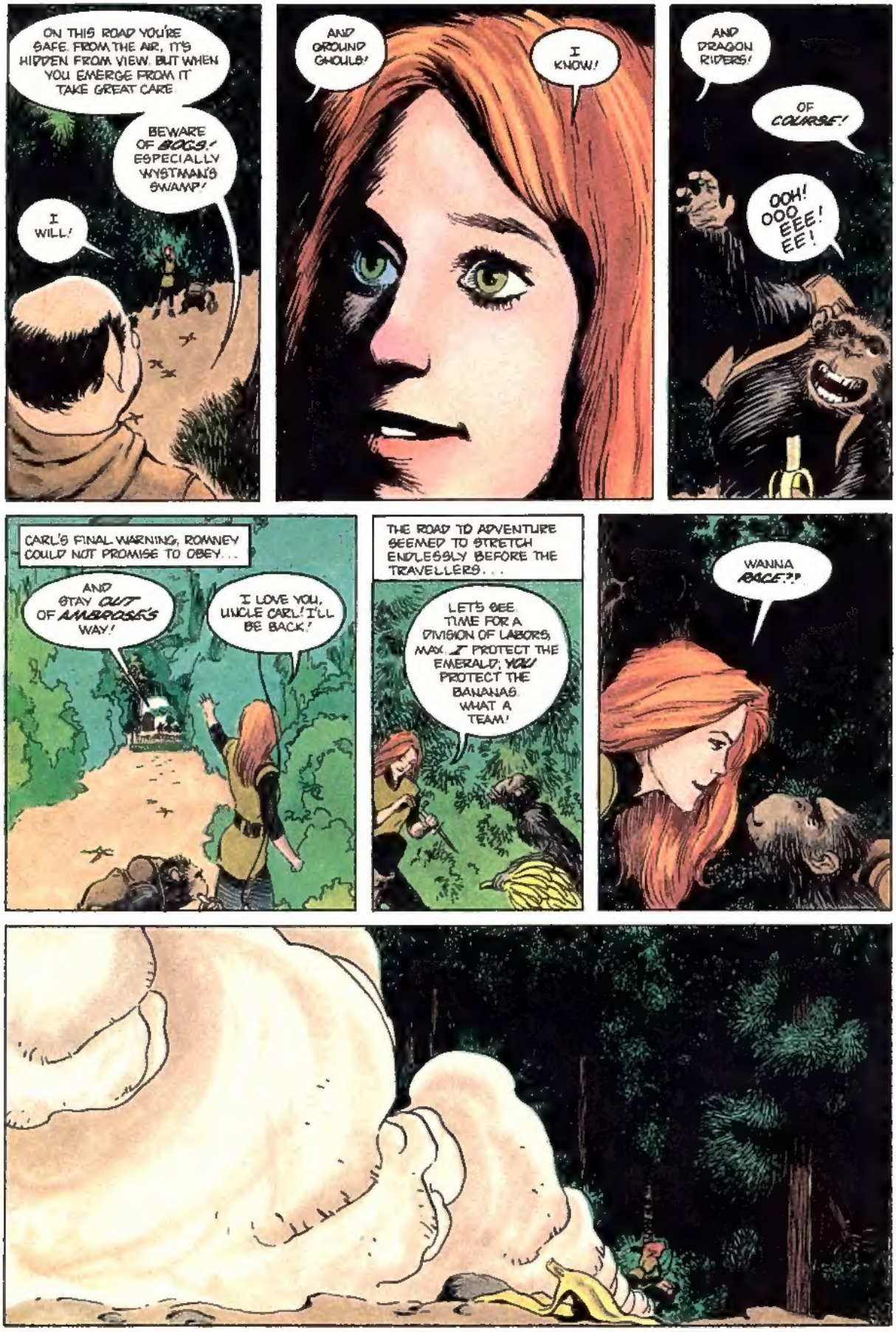
THUS BEGAN ROMNEY'S TUTELAGE UNDER CARL. FOR THE NEXT SEVEN YEARS, SHE WOULD EAGERLY ABSORB ALL THAT HE TAUGHT HER.
BUT WHO IS COUNT ZORRYN, UNCLE CARL?
WELL...
ROMNEY WAS ASTUTE ENOUGH TO SEE THAT NO NORMAL ADULT WOULD SYMPATHIZE WITH A CHILD'S PLANS FOR REVENGE, ESPECIALLY ON THE SCALE SHE ENVISIONED, SO, SAGELY DETERMINING TO KEEP HER OWN COUNSEL, SHE WHEEDLED WHAT INFORMATION SHE COULD FROM CARL ABOUT AMBROSE...
HAVE THERE BEEN OTHER NEWCOMERS LIKE ME WHO KNEW YOUR LANGUAGE?
THERE WAS ONE, A MAN YOU NEED HAVE NO DEALINGS WITH, ROMNEY.


OH, BUT I WILL HAVE DEALINGS WITH AMBROSE, UNCLE CARL.
SOMEDAY I'LL FIND HIM, MOTHER. I PROMISE YOU THAT SOMEDAY I'LL FINISH WHAT YOU BEGAN.


YOU MUST NEVER KILL WITHOUT GOOD REASON, ROMNEY. BUT YOU MUST BE PREPARED TO KILL WITHOUT HESITATION IF YOU EVER DO HAVE A REASON.
ROMNEY'S SINGLE-MINDED ATTENTION TO STUDY AND HER QUICK UNDERSTANDING DELIGHTED HER TEACHER.
YOU'RE AN EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT, CHILD!
CARL DIDN'T KNOW THAT ROMNEY HAD STRONG MOTIVATION TO BE EXCEPTIONAL --NOR DID HE KNOW HOW WELL HIS TEACHINGS SERVED HER UNVOICED PURPOSE...


CARL TAUGHT HER TO DISTINGUISH EDIBLE FROM POISONOUS PLANTS TO PROTECT HERSELF...
...AND SHE VERY CAREFULLY NOTED WHICH PLANTS WERE THE MOST DEADLY.
CARL INTRODUCED HER TO BOTH OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH DANGER TO HERSELF...
...AND ROMNEY PAID AN ALMOST MORBID ATTENTION TO METHODS OF LAYING AMBUSH.
SHE QUICKLY LEARNED THE ART OF COOKING IN THE WILD...
...AND WONDERED IDLY WHETHER BURNING TO DEATH WOULD BE TOO QUICK AND KIND A FATE FOR HER ENEMY.
CARL WISHED TO INSTILL IN HIS CHARGE A RESPECT AND LOVE FOR ALL LIFE...
...AND THOUGH SHE ACCEPTED ALL THAT SHE COULD OF HIS PHILOSOPHY, SHE FOUND THAT HER THOUGHTS WERE INVARIABLY DIRECTED TO THE IMMENSE VALUE, NOT OF ALL LIFE, BUT OF ONE DEATH.


AND FINALLY THE DAY CAME WHEN ROMNEY KNEW IT WAS TIME TO CONTINUE THE QUEST THAT HER MOTHER HAD BEGUN LONG AGO ON ANOTHER WORLD...
I KNOW YOU OPPOSE ME ONLY OUT OF LOVE, UNCLE CARL, AND I WOULD NEVER WILLINGLY HURT YOU, BUT YOU MUST HAVE FAITH IN ME AND IN WHAT YOU'VE TAUGHT ME. YOU KNOW, SURELY, THAT I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF VERY WELL.
AND MAX WILL PLAY CHAPERONE. TRUST ME.


ON THIS ROAD YOU'RE SAFE FROM THE AIR, IT'S HIDDEN FROM VIEW. BUT WHEN YOU EMERGE FROM IT TAKE GREAT CARE
BEWARE OF BOGS! ESPECIALLY WYSTMAN'S SWAMP!
I WILL!
AND GROUND GHOULS!
I KNOW!
AND DRAGON RIDERS!
OF COURSE!
OOH! OOO EEE! EE!
CARL'S FINAL WARNING, ROMNEY COULD NOT PROMISE TO OBEY...
AND STAY OUT OF AMBROSE'S WAY!
I LOVE YOU, UNCLE CARL! I'LL BE BACK!
THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE SEEMED TO STRETCH ENDLESSLY BEFORE THE TRAVELLERS...
LET'S SEE. TIME FOR A DIVISION OF LABORS, MAX. I PROTECT THE EMERALD; YOU PROTECT THE BANANAS. WHAT A TEAM!
WANNA RACE?!